



Testimony of Samantha Collins
Connecticut School Counselor Association
in regards to

H.B. No. 5037- AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023.
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education
Public Hearing - February 17, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Samantha Collins and I am a counselor in Connecticut and a Connecticut School Counselor Association board member. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB5037- An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023. **Specifically, I am writing today to testify about the importance of school counselors and the need to fund additional school counselors so that every student has access to a school counselor.**

School counselors work with all students in a school. Research shows that implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program has a positive impact on student outcomes, including **improved attendance, reduced discipline, improved grades, increased SAT scores, increased graduation rates, increased college-going and persistence rates.** A K-12 comprehensive school counseling program is planned, sequential, developmentally appropriate and is delivered by a certified school counselor. Comprehensive school counseling programs address each student's social-emotional, career, post-secondary planning, and academic needs. A comprehensive school counseling program is data driven, and includes a collaboration effort with school administrators, classroom teachers, student support services, school staff, parents, and community stakeholders. This cannot happen without school counselors in all of Connecticut's public schools. Currently, **fewer than 25% of Connecticut's elementary school children have access to school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programming.** Recent research in Connecticut has identified that students in **districts with elementary school counselors have improved performance outcomes versus districts without,** regardless of location or socioeconomic status (Parzych, Donohue, Gaesser, Chiu, 2019). The elementary school years set the foundation for developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for children to become healthy, competent, and confident learners.

Connecticut is **37th** in the nation in student to school counselor ratios at 457:1 (2018-19). School counseling positions were actually **cut** in some districts during a global pandemic in which the students of Connecticut need access to social-emotional, academic, and career support more than ever. Funding needs to be directed towards student support services. It is unfair and unethical that students have to bear economic and health-related stress with less support. The adults of Connecticut need to support our future, our children. After an extended period of distance/hybrid learning, our students need school counselors more than ever. Educators and students cannot continue to perform at the same level when their environment continually becomes more challenging due to increased pressures and diminished resources. Let's be proactive instead of reactive.

I respectfully encourage the appropriations committee to address the lack of adequate financial support for school counseling positions in the state of Connecticut. I would ask that you adopt guidelines and recommendations for appropriate student-to-school counselor ratios and funding to increase access to student support services. Research in Connecticut shows that lower-performing schools and schools in lower-socioeconomic status communities maintain higher caseloads than higher-performing schools (Parzych, Donohue, Gaesser, Chiu, 2019). In CT:

- High-performing schools average school counselor-to-student ratios:
 - o High School Level = 1:182, Middle School Level = 1:211
- Low-performing schools average school counselor-to-student ratios:
 - o High School Level = 1:285, Middle School Level = 1:891

Lowering ratios allows school counselors to effectively deliver a comprehensive school counseling program to better meet students' academic, career, post-secondary planning, and social-emotional needs (Parzych, Donohue, Gaesser, Chiu, 2019). I would ask that the appropriations committee consider appropriating funding specifically for school counseling and the hiring of more school counselors so that all of our students in Connecticut can have access to a school counselor and comprehensive programs. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Samantha Collins
Event Manager, Connecticut School Counselor Association
samanthabeisenberg@gmail.com